



Merrily Kerr, Time Out New York, July 8 - 15 2004

As I crawled into a small hole under the bathroom sink in Christoph Buchel's installation at the Swiss Institute, I remembered the advice printed on a handout at maccarone inc., the site of the artist's last show in New York: "Leave your Prada at home." Once again, Buchel has constructed a building-within-a-building that requires visitors to squeeze - often on hands and knees - through a disorienting series of spaces. The initial encounter is straightforward enough: We step off the elevator into a shabby corridor that leads into an apartment (the door is ajar) where a wall divides a one-bedroom bachelor pad in two.

Although the apartment is full of personal belongings, it nonetheless has a sterile, uninhabited quality. The gritty dividing wall may provoke some mild speculation about whether the space is occupied by warring roommates or one seriously conflicted soul, but the real interest - even thrill - comes from navigating the installation (assuming you're thin and agile enough to do so.) The final challenge is to crawl inside a fireplace, then grope along a passageway that leads into an unlit bunker, littered with shell casings and sanbags. After arousing our fear and discomfort, Buchel provokes our disgust as we are required to exit the space through the bathroom, face hovering near the toilet. The journey through the installation is by turns delightful, revolting and surprising; the overall experience is visceral. Buchel forces us to drop our critical distance and get our hands dirty.



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